APPLE BLOSSOMS.

He that will not thrill at a woman's glance is ancient enough to die—
But other things hint of heaven as well as a beautiful woman's eye!
And when dispirited, puttering 'round, and the skies gray shadows fling,
I look to the days that soon will come with the apple blossoms of spring.

There are visions of bobbing cork and line, and sunshine to linger in,
And blue mists hovering about the hills that loom a leviathan's fin.
And the soul leaps out and bathes itself in the liquid songs birds sing—
And ho! for the apple blossoms that make the blush on the cheek of spring!

—Will T. Hale, in Chicago Times-Herald.

A RACE AGAINST ODDS.

By FRANK W. CALKINS.

NEARLY a year before Custer's fatal battle at the Rosebud, the territory surrounding the Black Hills was so infested with hostile bands of Indians that it was not safe for whites to approach the mining region except in large and well-armed parties. Numerous narrow escapes have been recorded, but many desperate adventures occurred no accounts of which have ever been published.

This story is an instance in point. Early in the spring of 1896 John Anson, a young settler from Southern Nebraska, left a wife and two small children at his homestead and joined a large party of miners and adventurers who had gathered at Sidney in that State—a party so formidable in numbers, and so well armed and led, that it came through to French Creek in safety. There John Anson parted company with the expedition—it was bound for Deadwood, which had just begun to be heard of—and joined some prospectors near Custer's Gulch.

He had been at work for three weeks when a party came from the south, in which were two of his former neighbors, who told him that when they left, nine days before, diphtheria was raging in their neighborhood; that his younger child had died, and that the other and also his wife was very ill with the disease.

Anson was a man of most affectionate nature. Nothing had sent him forth from home except the hope to better the future of his family; he had been sternly bearing up under homesickness that tore hungrily at his heart, and he would have gone crazy had he tried to hold out against the impulse to hasten back to his wife and the little golden-haired girl who might still be alive.

To try the backward way alone was to run many chances of death for one of escape, but his life was as nothing to the imperative call of his soul. Back he would go, and that same evening hour which brought him the dreadful tidings saw him on his way.

He was mounted on a tough, wiry pony for which he had given everything he possessed, except what the pony carried. With only the clothes that he wore, a pair of blankets, three days' provisions, his long-range Winchester and one hundred cartridges, he started to make the trip. He rode for the Cheyenne River, thirty miles distant, as his first stage.

In the tall grass of the river bottom he picketed his pony, then spread his blankets at daybreak and was soon sleeping soundly; for this man was no weak degenerate who could be distracted by mental suffering from the acts necessary to success in his desperate enterprise. He must sleep to keep his power of riding and fighting, and sleep he did as if with iron resolution.

The sun showed that the time was about ten o'clock in the forenoon when Anson was roused by the shrill whinnying of his pony. He sat up and saw Buckskin, with head high, gazing toward the western hills. There a number of horsemen had halted upon a rise across the river, and were looking intently in his direction. They were Indians.

At first Anson guessed they must have thought that an Indian had made a lone camp or stopped to stalk game. But a moment later he saw they grasped the situation; for he had scarcely risen to his feet when they spurred their beasts down into the valley toward him. There were thirteen of them, and his case was plainly desperate.

He was at a loss for some seconds whether to stand and fight or to run, but as the long grass would give them cover to approach him, he determined finally to escape by riding. He set about saddling his pony, which was so nervous and uneasy that it nearly broke away from him while he was tightening the cinches. When he had mounted, the Indians were within a half-mile of him, and he already faintly heard their yells at his preparation for flight. They were Sioux, and he knew they "meant business."

He wondered grimly how many of them would be left to transact this "business" when they should have closed in on John Anson—him who would be defending himself in the hope of reaching his wife and his little Alice, and the grave of his dead baby.

To his satisfaction, he found his pony seemingly as fresh as if it had not been ridden for a week. He saw that the reputation of Dodge's Buckskin for speed and endurance was deserved, and he patted the neck of the little fellow as kindly as if his own soul was clear of trouble. Buckskin tossed his head with delight, and snorted, "br-r-r-rm!" as if exulting that the time had come to prove his mettle as it had never been proved before.

Anson, although he had not until that day had an actual fight with Indians, had more than once been in danger from them. As he had often hunted buffalo, elk and antelope, he could use a rifle effectively from horseback. His Winchester was of the largest calibre, and his cartridges were fresh. If he could secure a position sheltering him on one side, he might hope to beat off the small band now hot upon his trail.

But he knew that the canyons and "breaks" of White River, which lay in front, were swarming with Sioux, lying in wait for stragglers or small parties of whites then making for the "Hills." Moreover, the agency Indians at Red Cloud and Spotted Tail on either hand were almost as hostile and as dangerous as the Sioux.

He had planned to lie close in the Cheyenne valley that day, and to ride through this particularly perilous region during the coming night. A trail with guarded stations led toward Sidney, but he had left it about midnight for the most direct route toward wife and child. Now he had no choice but to ride straight forward or stop and fight at a disadvantage.

As he spurred Buckskin forward, he often glanced back over his shoulder. He saw the Indians dip out of sight into the bed of the Cheyenne. He saw them rise up again like a flight of wild ducks. Now he heard prolonged yells above the hoof-beats of his pony, as the savages galloped through the long grass of the valley.

They seemed to be gaining on him, and yet he did not wish to push Buckskin to his utmost until he might fairly hope to dodge the enemy among the breaks of White River or the canyons of the Running Water. That he might hope to do if he did not encounter another band. He determined to fight as he ran. So, as he rode out of the valley along the slope of the bordering high lands, he turned in his saddle and fired at the squad of savages whose ponies were bobbing up and down through the tall grass like a lot of jack-rabbits. He judged them to be nearly half a mile distant.

As their keen eyes caught sight of the puff of smoke from his rifle they scattered and spread out, fanlike. A second later, a dozen white puffs rose from their breech-loaders, and several little spouts of dust, knocked up along the side hill about him, told of the effectiveness of the rifles with which the United States Government had furnished them.

Had he been at halt they might have hit him, and yet he felt he must halt to shoot well and get the full benefit of his superior weapon.

Now he looked forward grimly to the end of the chase. It come to him that if he knew his wife and his other child at home were dead of that terrible disease he should delight to face squarely about at once, and fight as long as life and ammunition held out. But he did not know this, and so he kept on steadily toward home.

He felt pestered, goaded, fierce, but still cool and wary. He would not by any miscalculation imperil his poor chances of reaching his wife and little Alice; he would run wisely till his judgment told him he must stop and shoot—then woe to the nearest of the yelling foe!

The pace soon carried him to the high cactus-sprinkled plateau which separated the valleys of the Cheyenne and White Rivers. Then he saw for miles on every hand gray plains to the right, the precipitous breaks of White River in front looming up on the opposite side of its valley, and the clearly defined outlines of Crow Buttes far to the left. No Indians were in sight except those behind him.

It was about noon; the day was bright. His race for life would be noted by any war-parties on the plain within six miles. He knew well how hopeless his case would prove should any Indians be where they could cut off his advance.

He continued to scan the level plains anxiously, and once was startled for an instant by the sight of several crows flapping along near the horizon far in front of him. It is amazing that large birds flying on the sky-line look and move so much like galloping Indian horsemen.

An hour or more wore on, and the Sioux had gained only slightly upon him. They had perceived that he was well mounted, and had settled down to a long chase. Anson knew something of their persistent, savage patience.

Brave little Buckskin as yet held up stoutly under the strain of swift riding, but Anson resolved to lighten the pony's load. He cut loose his blankets, stowed his cartridges, some biscuit and dried beef in his coat pockets, and flung blankets and saddle-bag away.

Soon a chorus of shriller, longer yells reached him from the rear. The Sioux had jumped to the conclusion that his horse was breaking down. They began urging their ponies to their utmost speed, and gained rapidly. As their beasts had started upon the race fresher than his hard-ridden Buckskin, he realized that they might soon come close enough to shoot at him effectively. The time had come!

Anson drew rein abruptly, dismounted, and with the cool, deadly rage of a born fighting man standing righteously on his defence, brought his fifty-calibre Winchester to his shoulder. He expected the band to halt, but they only scattered out somewhat, and the swiftest ponies darted ahead.

The foremost Indian was now within seven hundred yards, as Anson judged. Low on the neck of his pony lay the savage, plying his quirt with one hand. Behind him swarmed the crowd, yelling to keep up their own courage and to unsettle that of the white man.

Anson spoke soothingly to the restless pony, put the reins around one ankle, raised his gun-sight for four hundred yards, and dropped on one knee.

The foremost rider was now so near that Anson could make out the lower parts of his calico shirt and distinguish its color as it flapped and fluttered about his thighs. The white man drew a steady bead. Two seconds later and both Indian and pony rolled upon the ground.

The express bullet, if Anson's aim had been altogether true, must have bored through the beast's neck and through the body of its rider. At any rate, neither of them rose again.

Throwing another cartridge into the rifle-barrel Anson aimed at the next Indian, who had jerked his pony to an abrupt halt, and sat bolt upright, seemingly unaware of his own danger in the surprise of the moment. An ounce-and-a-quarter ball knocked him out of his saddle before he had time to recover himself.

In a twinkling the others scattered widely apart, drew rein, dismounted and began firing from behind their ponies. Their bullets skipped and whistled and sung spitefully over Anson's head as they fired hurriedly. But he now felt that his chances of getting home had improved. He was almost out of their range, they were well within his, and he was not shooting to miss.

He was very cool and careful. A pony went down under the third heavy bullet and the rider scurried away to the shelter of a small mound. The fourth stopped an Indian in the act of firing under his animal's neck.

With a certain wild impulse of love for his good long-range, Anson threw open the lever for his fifth shot. But he did not speed the bullet. He wished to kill no man except in defence of his own life, and now the Sioux had sprung to their ponies and were racing out of range.

The Indian behind the mound, however, held his position and kept on firing. Anson turned his gun that way. But then he observed how far short the Sioux bullet fell. Evidently the man was armed with nothing better than a carbine. Anson rose to his feet without firing and examined his pony.

Finding Buckskin unharmed, the marksman mounted and rode on toward White River at a jog-trot, hoping he had taught the band of Indians a lesson that would keep them at a distance until he could give them the slip.

Thinking of his wife and child devoutly, Anson regarded his escape almost as a direct interposition of God on his behalf. More than a hundred shots must have been fired at him; the Indians must have been within five hundred yards of him; and he thought it wonderful that neither he nor his pony had been hit, although he knew how few marksmen can shoot with accuracy at such a range.

After Anson had ridden a short distance, the Indians came forward to the place where they had fought. He watched them over his shoulder, as they dismounted and grouped themselves around one or another of the fallen. They seemed to intend to follow him no farther, and he concluded he might hope to get safely out of that dangerous region in the darkness of the coming night.

After a time he again looked back toward the Sioux, and was amazed to see only the bleak prairie. The Indians had utterly vanished.

How had they gone? And where? Back, Anson decided, and into some ravine which his eye had missed, for he judged he was now nearly upon the middle of the divide between the Cheyenne and the White River.

Anson jogged on some distance with a feeling of extreme uneasiness. There was something ominous in that sudden disappearance of the Indians. His eye roved continually over the plain on all sides of him. Had they dropped into some hidden ravine that intercepted his route? Perhaps they were gone to arouse other camps of Sioux not far distant. At any rate he should ride faster. As the slow trot had relieved his pony, which seemed still in good condition, he spurred forward now at a canter.

Half an hour passed away and still no sign of Indians! He was now moving down the slope toward White River, and had begun to feel less alert, when his roving glance struck what seemed a little ridge not two hundred yards to his right hand. He rode toward it and saw that it was indeed, as he had suspected, a gash in the plain, a hidden ravine, stretching, insinuating and treacherous, beside his line of retreat.

Now he knew what had become of the Indians. This ravine must lead back close to the place where he had fought them; they had taken to its cover; they were hotly after him and looking for a chance to shoot him from behind the wall of the gash. He must get beyond range of its edge.

Anson veered off instantly and rode to the northeast, determined to hold that direction until across White River, but he had not ridden a half-mile in the new direction before coming upon the head of another abrupt, ditch-like ravine, which ran descending to the north.

Anson halted a moment and stared warily about him. A drop in front of the general level showed the trace of still another canon, parallel to the course he had ridden that day, running to the valley of White River. He was between two ravines, and the Sioux were doubtless in both of them.

Anson saw no way left but to make his race down the divide; so he turned his horse directly toward White River and galloped on for dear life. The savages intended to catch him either while crossing one of these ravines or at the mouth of it. They were probably in advance, but he might still get ahead by a burst of speed.

The country, growing rougher as he approached the river valley, made hard running for his pony, but he kept little Buckskin at his best pace for the next twenty minutes, and then plunged down into the broad level land with deep relief, as he had left the mouths of the canons on either hand. Again he felt that strange sense of having been befriended by Providence, and now his hope to reach home rose high.

He had not ridden 500 yard into the valley when he heard faint yells. Turning, he saw the enemy come tearing out of the nearest canon. On seeing him they shouted defiance and disappointment, and fired scattering shots as they rode along the slope of the bluff. When he dismounted to answer them, they hurried back to the mouth of the ravine.

Anson rode on again, and saw no more of the savages, and he did not encounter any others that afternoon. He crossed White River, made his way safely through the cavernous and precipitous breaks upon the other side, and camped to rest himself and his weary pony.

That night, as he had now no provision for a ride directly across the country, he made a detour and reached the stage road to Sidney. From there he took the longer and safer route home, which he finally reached to find that his wife and surviving child were entirely recovered.—Youth's Companion.

"Two Whoops an' a Holler."

In various parts of the country they have a way of telling distances by "right smart piece," "gunshot off," "day's journey," and the like; but in Southwest Florida they do it differently. A party of amateur pedestrians were "doing" the State, and, as often happens with such travelers, had lost their way. It was near night and they were at a loss what to do. Presently they met a countryman riding a cow. "Can you tell us how far it is to Boston?" one of the party asked. The countryman looked to the right and left, as though seeking information from the palmettos and prickly pears. "Well, I reckon hit's 'bout two whoops," he said, at length. "Two what?" The countryman seemed to take this as challenging his veracity, for he once more looked questionably at the palmettos and prickly pears. "P'raps hit may be some further," he admitted, reflectively, "but I 'low hit ain't more'n two whoops an' a holler."

New Breadmaking Process.

A French inventor converts grain into dough at one operation without milling. The grain is soaked, and entering one end of the machine is crushed and disintegrated, the paste passing on to the kneading machine at the other end of the apparatus, where it is aerated and kneaded into dough, which can be preserved indefinitely without injury. The nutritive qualities of the grain, bran included, are kept.

Polyglot Menus.

No restaurant in St. Petersburg will be allowed hereafter to have its bill of fare exclusively in a foreign language. By a recent edict a Russian version must always be added.

WORDS OF WISDOM.

Any one may do a casual act of good nature, but a continuation of them shows it is a part of the temperament.

The man who is ever lamenting, never rejoicing, is playing a part, for life is neither constantly painful nor constantly gay.

The great duty of life is not to give pain; and the most acute reasoner cannot find an excuse for one who voluntarily wounds the heart of a fellow creature.

Teach self-denial, and make its practice pleasurable, and you create for the world a destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer.

True nobility is shown by gentle consideration and courtesy to all, and brings its own reward in the extra fineness of perception its practice bestows.

Good resolutions are like vines, a mass of beauty when supported on a frame, of good deeds, but very poor things when allowed to lie unheeded and untrained on the ground.

My experience leads me to believe that the supply of poetry, or verse assumed to be poetry, is more egregiously in excess of the demand than any other description of literature.

To-morrow you have no business with. You steal if you touch to-morrow. It is God's. Every day has enough to keep every man occupied, without concerning himself with the things that lie beyond.

It may be truly said that no man does any work perfectly, who does not enjoy his work. Joy in one's work is the consummate tool without which the work may be done indeed but without its finest perfection.

Man Is Condensed Air.

Liebig, the greatest chemist of the century, writes: "Science has demonstrated the fact that man, the being which performs the great wonders, is formed of condensed air and solidified and liquid gases, that he lives upon condensed as well as uncondensed air, and that by means of the same mysterious agent he moves or causes to be moved, the heaviest weights with the velocity of the wind. But the strangest part of the matter is that thousands of millions of these tabernacles of condensed air are going on two legs, destroying other forms of condensed air which they may need to build up their own wasted tissues or for shelter or clothing, or, on account of their egotism and fancied power, destroying each other in pitched battles, using implements which are but other forms of condensed air, the material of which they themselves are formed or composed. Chemistry supplies the clearest proof that, so far as concerns this, the ultimate and most minute composition and structure, some of which are so infinitesimal as to be beyond the comprehension of our senses, man is, to all appearances, at least, composed of materials identical with those which compose the structural being of the ox or the dog, or even the lowest animal in the scale of creation."

Solomon seems to have entertained the same idea. See Ecclesiastes iii., 19: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." Pittsburg Dispatch.

Had a Money-Making Hip.

Railroad officials here are blue over news received from Virginia. Two months ago a man fell on the platform of a train about five miles out of this city. His heel caught in a crack and his hip was dislocated by the fall. Three surgeons examined him, including the company's surgeon, and all declared that the man would be a cripple for life. The man was paid $2200 and his lawyer's fees. In addition to this he was furnished with a baggage car and transportation for his lawyer and a nurse to go with him to Chicago. The railroad officials felt that they had made a cheap settlement. The other day a man fell on a platform on the Norfolk and Western in Virginia and worked the same old story of the dislocated hip. But he had been seen on the previous day hunting for a place to catch his heel. A traveling man was present and recognized him as the man who had been paid by the Indianapolis road. An investigation revealed that the man was a professional contortionist and could dislocate any part of his body without pain. He has swindled several roads.—Indianapolis Correspondence Chicago Inter-Ocean.

The Plea of an Indian.

An educated Arapahoe Indian, speaking recently of the wholesale arraignment of the Indians by the whites, as "lazy and dirty," and that tent life was not conducive to cleanliness; that he himself had often watched white people when they were camping in the summer, and he was positive that after even two weeks of it they emerged far less immaculate than when they went in. "How were your own ancestors of Gaul, Britain or Germany?" said he, warming to his subject. "Think of them and realize that the Indian is not the only dirty, lazy one, even in the United States, and the white people are in advance of the Indian in having soap."—Trenton (N. J.) American.